

---

# 7H

## Information

### *Professional Services Committee of the Whole*

### **Update on the Activities Related to Modifying the Education Specialist Credential Requirements**

---

**Executive Summary:** This report provides information about the activities that have occurred since June 2006 to modify the requirements for Education Specialist credentials, including (a) implementation procedures to add an English learner authorization to the current Education Specialist Credential, b) conducting field meetings to examine issues related to modifying the Credential and c) establishing a Special Education Workgroup to review the structure and requirements for the Special Education credentials.

**Recommended Action:** This is an information item only.

**Presenter:** Jan Jones Wadsworth, Consultant,  
Michael McKibbin, Administrator, Professional  
Services Division

**Goal 1: Promote educational excellence through the preparation and certification of professional educators.**

- ◆ Sustain high quality standards for the preparation of professional educators.
- ◆ Sustain high quality standards for the performance of credential candidates.

November-December 2006



---

## **Update on the Activities Related to Modifying the Education Specialist Credential Requirements**

---

### **Introduction**

This agenda item provides information about the activities that have occurred since the Commission authorized staff to begin the process of review and modifying requirements for the Education Specialist credential. The item outlines the major themes that emerged from the Special Education field meetings that were held in August and September and provides information about the next steps that will be taken in the process.

### **Background**

At the May 31-June 1, 2006 Commission meeting, Commissioners reviewed four issues and proposed solutions to address key issues related to the current Special Education credential structure. The issues and the related activities adopted at the meeting are summarized below.

The Commission acted to require all Education Specialist teacher preparation programs to embed English learner (EL) content in their programs and to respond to the appropriate English learner-related Preliminary and Professional Level teacher preparation standards. Education Specialist programs are required to submit program amendments that include evidence of meeting these standards. Upon supplying the necessary evidence and implementing the program-level changes, programs will be authorized to recommend that graduates from these programs receive an EL authorization. The review is taking place between June and December of 2006. There are approximately fifty approved Education Specialist Credential Programs that are expected to provide amended programs for review by December 2006.

The Commission directed that voluntary stakeholder meetings be held to begin the review the structure of the Education Specialist Credential including professional level credential and subject matter preparation issues. Staff conducted fourteen meetings throughout the state. Approximately 215 stakeholders attended the field meetings, including representatives from program sponsors, BTSA and Internship programs, nonpublic schools, SELPA directors, parents and related professional organizations. Commission staff also conducted input sessions at the California Council on Teacher Education, the Teacher Education Division of the Council of Exceptional Children, and the statewide meeting of the Special Education Local Planning Area directors. A summary of the issues that were discussed and the themes that emerged is provided in the following section.

In addition to the information collected at the field meetings, over the next several months Commission staff will conduct a series of studies that will examine special education practices in other states and a web-based job analysis of special education teachers.

The Commission also directed staff to convene a work group of interested stakeholders to determine whether the current structure for special education credentials continues to be the most appropriate to meet the needs of California's schools and students. The Special Education Workgroup will review the information gathered in the field meetings and the data from the staff studies. As a result of their deliberations the workgroup will make recommendations to the Commission regarding possible changes in the structure and requirements for special education credentials. The members of the Special Education Workgroup will be selected based on the procedures adopted by the Commission and will be drawn from the groups identified in the May 31-June 1, 2006 agenda item.

In July the Commission was notified that the Governor's budget included funds to support the Commission's efforts to examine and revise the structure and requirements of the Education Specialist Credential. A total of \$200,000 was allocated from Title II funds to support the EL amendment review process, the field meetings, and the Workgroup deliberations.

Senate Bill 1209 (Chapter 517, Statutes of 2006) amends Education Code Section 44265.1, and states that, "by December 1, 2007, the commission shall report to the Legislature and the Governor on the current existing process and requirements for obtaining a specialist credential in special education and recommend modifications to enhance and expedite these procedures." The workgroup will provide recommended modifications to the Commission in October, 2007.

### **Discussion**

In August and September Commission staff met with more than 215 persons who elected to attend the fourteen Special Education field meetings and provide advice about the structure of Education Specialist credentials. In addition more than 200 educators attended professional association meetings and offered their suggestions about restructuring Education Specialist credentials. Staff provided a series of questions to stimulate discussion.

Several themes emerged from the discussions. These themes will be forwarded to the Special Education Workgroup, will help frame the questions in the web-based job analysis and will be areas of focus as staff reviews the requirements and procedures of other states as well as federal requirements. The themes that are summarized below are those topics and issues that emerged at several of the field meetings. The Workgroup will have access to all of the notes that were gathered as well as the reports of the studies that will be conducted, but these themes, as well as others suggested by the Commission, will be used as organizers of the initial Workgroup discussions.

### **Theme A- Structure of the Education Specialist Credential**

The opinions expressed in the field meetings related to credential structure covered a wide spectrum. Issues related to new federal subject matter preparation requirements led to suggestions by some participants that grades and subjects taught ought to be the primary consideration in the credential authorization. Other field meeting participants asserted that the services delivered by the teacher should be the first consideration.

Participants pointed out that Education Specialist teachers find themselves teaching in all kinds of settings including resource specialist, special day classes, full inclusion settings, team teaching, itinerant placements for school-based and home-infant services, non-public schools with no general education students in the school, life skills classrooms, settings for the medically fragile, and incarcerated youth, among others, and the structure of the credential needs to accommodate this range of possible placements. Another suggestion was to return to the requirement that all teachers should have a multiple or single subject credential as a prerequisite to hold the Education Specialist Credential.

#### Theme B- Transitions and Professional Level Instruction

One of the focus areas of the field meetings was what should be the appropriate continuing preparation for an Education Specialist teacher upon receiving a preliminary credential. The appropriate advanced preparation for those teachers who hold both an Education Specialist and a Multiple or Single Subject Credential was also discussed. One of the areas of consensus was that there were areas of unnecessary redundancy for those who hold two credentials or are participants in a both university based Education Specialist Level II preparation and a BTSA Induction program. In areas such as technology, healthy environments and teaching special populations, the individualized plans that each candidate must complete should be used to assure that redundancies are eliminated. The Commission staff will communicate this expectation to approved Education Specialist Level II and BTSA Induction programs.

#### Theme C- Subject Matter Requirements

There was general agreement at the field meetings that NCLB and IDEA federal requirements related to requiring an academic major in each of the content areas that an Education Specialist teaches will be a challenge. This will be especially true for teachers assigned to secondary, middle school and junior high school settings. The Workgroup will need to explore issues related to credential authorization, subject matter requirements, teaching assignment and program curriculum and standards as they address this challenge.

#### Theme D- Revisions in the Credential Program Curriculum

There were many suggestions in the field meetings about changes in the content taught in an Education Specialist Credential Program. Among these was greater attention to areas such as autism. Several mentioned the need to devote more attention to collaborative service delivery models. Still others expressed concern that there was not enough attention paid to service delivery to older school age students.

Several respondents stressed the importance of orchestrating the difference between basic knowledge and advanced knowledge in the preparation of Special Education teachers. They indicated that this was particularly important the areas of assessment, behavior management/support and curriculum modification. Many also expressed the importance of aligning and integrating the advanced preparation from the university or district based program and the support and application provided through a BTSA Induction program. Although this integration is allowed currently, there is much progress that can be made in coordinating and streamlining this effort.

Although these themes are not exhaustive, they give four examples of the feedback that was received. They serve as a good starting point for the Workgroup. Staff seeks direction of other themes that should be brought to the attention of the Workgroup.

### **Next steps**

Staff will solicit nominees for the Special Education Workgroup and will select the membership according to Commission guidelines. Staff will conduct studies of the structure of the Education Specialist credential including a job analysis. Staff will provide periodic updates of the activities of the Workgroup and will provide recommendations for modifications to the Education Specialist Credential for Commission consideration at the October 2007 Commission meeting. The proposed schedule for the Special Education Workgroup is outlined below.

November 2006:	Announce the nomination and selection process for the Special Education Workgroup on the CTC website
January 2007:	Provide recommendations to the Executive Director for approval of the Special Education Workgroup members
January-March 2007:	Conduct study of special education procedures in other states, conduct web-based job analysis survey of special education credential expectations with California educators.
February/September 2007:	Hold six or seven two day meetings with the Special Education Workgroup to review the credentials and standards as well as identify possible recommendations for further policy work and provide periodic updates on their progress.
October, 3-4, 2007:	Provide information to the Commission on the findings of the Special Education Workgroup and recommend further direction for policy development related to the structure of Special Education credentials, as appropriate.
December 1, 2007:	Pursuant Education Code 44265.1, report to the Legislature and the Governor on the current existing process and requirements for obtaining a specialist credential in special education and recommend modifications to enhance and expedite these procedures.